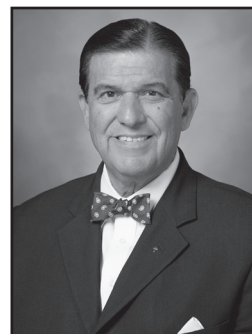


Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. Capitol Update

Fall 2013



New university is culmination of a dream



Senator Lucio celebrated Texas Governor Rick Perry's signing of the bill creating a new university in the Rio Grande Valley, with (left to right) University of Texas at Brownsville President Juliet Garcia, State Representative René Oliveira, University of Texas System Board of Regents Chairman Gene Powell, and University of Texas - Pan American President Robert Nelsen. (photo courtesy of Paul Chouy/UT-Brownsville)

Dear Friends,

Thank you for trusting me with the privilege of representing you. The needs of Texas Senate District 27 — Kleberg, Kenedy, Willacy, Cameron, and Hidalgo Counties — are the heart of my legislative agenda. During the 83rd Legislative Session, I continued my commitment to promoting economic development, health care, housing, and infrastructure in the Rio Grande Valley. This Capitol Update will give you valuable information on what my colleagues and I accomplished on your behalf.

As Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Education and member of the Senate Finance Committee, I was delighted to work on bills which improve the quality of Texas schools. Following the 2011 Session's unprecedented revenue shortfall, I was proud to help restore much of the devastating cuts made to public education. I also took tremendous pride in authoring legislation to increase participation in school breakfast programs. This bill is a giant step forward in ensuring Texas children reach their full potential.

Several bills of local importance passed, including my bill to streamline the process by which homeowners with unpaid claims against manufactured home sellers access state relief funds. I also sponsored legislation to encourage a commercial space industry, which may create permanent well-paying jobs and pump millions of dollars into our economy.

Finally, I was most proud to joint-author our delegation's biggest priority of the Session: the creation of a new first-class university in the Rio Grande Valley. With passage of this bill, the Valley will soon become a center for multinational education, medicine, and industry.

Please share with me your thoughts on issues that matter to you. Please also make your voices heard by voting, especially during the next general election, currently scheduled for November 5. Thank you for your support. It is an honor to work for the people of District 27.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddie Lucio, Jr.".

Eddie Lucio, Jr.

Valley to get new first-class university, medical school

The Rio Grande Valley will soon have a new emerging research university and medical school. Senate Bill 24 creates a University of Texas System school equitably allocated among Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr Counties. The bill requires the UT System to take full advantage of existing facilities at UT-Brownsville, UT-Pan American, and at the Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC) campuses in Harlingen and Edinburg.

The impact of this legislation cannot be overstated. It may create as many as 10,000 jobs. This university will also access the Permanent University Fund (PUF), money from which will build classrooms and cutting-edge research facilities. The UT System already approved more than \$40 million in PUF funds, and another \$100 million is pledged to accelerate the medical school.



Senator Lucio and State Representative René Oliveira celebrating Senate Bill 24 with UT-Brownsville students.

"This is one of the most important pieces of legislation of my career," Senator Lucio said. The inclusion of a future school of medicine marks the culmination of decades of work expanding higher education and medical education in our region."

Senator Lucio has dedicated his career to expanding educational opportunities in the Valley. He passed bills which created both UT Brownsville and the

RAHC. In 2011, he also authored legislation to transition the RAHC into a full medical school. This Session, in addition to joint-authoring Senate Bill 24, as a member of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Lucio secured \$10 million in the state's budget to facilitate the RAHC's transition.

The new university is expected to begin operations fall of 2015. Visit www.ProjectSouthTexas.com to view a timeline of the university's launch.

Legislation promotes local economic development

Local bills passed this Session improve industry, trade, and tourism, creating a positive economic impact for all of Texas.

SPACE X: Senator Lucio was instrumental in passing legislation to encourage commercial space flight in Texas. House Bill 2623 ensures the public's right to beach access while also providing a way to protect public safety during space launches. The bill allows short-term closures of beaches affected by launch sites and creates special rules ensuring summer beach access. Senator Lucio also worked with the Governor's office to secure up to \$15 million in incentive funds for SpaceX if it locates a spaceport in Texas.

TENASKA: Senate Bill 795 by Senator Lucio ensures that the Brownsville Public Utilities Board (BPUB) has the necessary authority to fulfill an

agreement with energy company Tenaska to build a power generating facility in Brownsville. Under the agreement, BPUB will transport natural gas to the facility and purchase 200 megawatts of electricity.

"The Valley's ability to produce local, clean energy will help modernize our energy infrastructure, create jobs, and increase property tax revenue. This project will be a major economic engine in our area," Senator Lucio said.

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX REBATE: House Bill 3042 will help the City of South Padre Island fund maintenance and public safety projects on its beaches by requiring the state rebate the City two percent of hotel occupancy taxes it generates locally. The total revenue generated is approximately \$3 million per biennium. The bill is especially important as

construction of a second causeway to the Island (made possible by legislation passed by Senator Lucio in 2011) will give tourists greater access to the beach and surrounding businesses.

"Millions of tourists come each year to South Padre Island. Beach erosion control and maintenance is important to help the City thrive as a premier tourist destination," Senator Lucio said.

BROWNSVILLE OVERWEIGHT CORRIDOR: House Bill 3125 encourages trade between the U.S. and Mexico by permanently designating the final portion of an overweight truck corridor from the international ports of entry to Brownsville. The Brownsville Port Authority issues licenses for oversized trucks, using fees collected to maintain roads. In 2010, approximately 6.5 percent of Texas/Mexico truck traffic went through Brownsville.



Rio Grande Valley Day

Welcoming constituents during the 83rd Legislative Session



Brownsville Day



Kingsville Day



Harlingen Day

School nutrition bills top Senator Lucio's education agenda



Top: Senator Lucio addresses public policy experts at the Hunger Roundtable Summit, organized by the Senator's office in Austin. At the Summit, attendees endorsed Senate Bill 376. Bottom: At the Capitol, Senator Lucio meets the Hunger Warriors, elementary students dedicated to ending childhood hunger in America.

COMBATING HUNGER: For Senator Lucio, the Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, eliminating hunger in Texas was the cornerstone of his legislative priorities.

Senate Bill 376 requires school districts to make available a free breakfast to all students if 80 percent or more of those students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Nearly three million Texas students qualify for subsidized meals and close to half attend schools where at least 80 percent of their peers also qualify.

Senator Lucio also passed House Bill 749, which requires the Department of Agriculture to work with the Texas Hunger Initiative at Baylor University to create a five-year plan to provide children greater access to summer meals.

For his efforts this Session, Senator Lucio has been recognized to Texas PTA's Legislative Honor Roll, with CHILDREN AT RISK's Voice for Children Award, and has been appointed to the National Conference of State Legislatures Foundation Hunger Partnership, a national group which highlights innovative solutions to hunger.

SCHOOL FUNDING: Senator Lucio and his colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Public Education added \$3.4 billion to Texas public schools in addition to the base budget, partially restoring public education cuts made last Session.

TESTING AND CURRICULUM REFORM: Senator Lucio joint-authored legislation to reform Texas' high-stakes testing regime and high school degree standards. House Bill 5 reduces the number of high school End-of-Course exams from 15 to five. The bill keeps graduation standards rigorous by requiring degree plans which include four courses in English, science, and mathematics. Senator Lucio also sponsored House Bill 2201, which will increase the number of career technology education courses that may satisfy advanced mathematics requirements.

DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAMS: Senate Bill 860 allows public technical colleges, such as Texas State Technical College, to offer technical courses as part of junior colleges' high school drop-out prevention programs. The bill strengthens previous legislation replicating the Pharr-San Juan Alamo Independent School District's dropout recovery program.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS: Senator Lucio continued his commitment to supporting public school counselors and licensed professional counselors (LPCs), passing four bills intended to improve counselor preparation, and streamline how LPCs are licensed and then hired by schools. For his efforts, the Senator was honored with the Texas Counseling Association Presidential Award, the Association's highest honor.

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS: Senate Bill 1557 requires the state to develop a strategic plan to incentivize private businesses to both donate to early college high schools and to work with the schools to maximize job placement opportunities.

SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT CHILDREN: Current law provides immigrant children a one-year exemption from state-mandated STAAR exams; however, it does not define what constitutes a year. A student may be enrolled just one day and have that count as an entire year. Senator Lucio's Senate Bill 377 provides that if a student is enrolled less than 60 days, that school year would not count toward their exemption.

'Park Girl' relief

Senate Bill 499 provides relief to the numerous victims of "Park Girl" Jo Leigh Ares. The bill removes the requirement that The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs rely only upon a verdict from a jury trial before awarding state dollars set aside for victims of fraud. As many as 80 of Ares' victims won verdicts in front of "bench" trials heard only by a judge, and not a jury. Current law —favoring jury trials over bench trial—prevents Ares's victims from recovering any of their losses.

"Without access to these funds, many victims of deceptive trade practices or violations of manufactured housing laws would have no way to get back the money they lost," Senator Lucio said.



Senator Lucio speaking on the floor of the Senate.

Bills improve and modernize water districts

HIDALGO COUNTY: Senator Lucio worked with budget leaders to amend House Bill 1025, a state appropriations bill, to authorize the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to make a \$10 million zero-interest loan to support Hidalgo County's Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Management Project, which is a series of infrastructure construction projects—water reclamation, flood protection, economic development, and green infrastructure—to be completed throughout the County. In 2012, voters in Hidalgo County approved a \$10 million bond program supporting the Project.



Senator Lucio meets with students at Brownsville Early College High School, April 2013. (photo courtesy of Brownsville ISD)

MODERNIZING WATER DISTRICTS: Senate Bill 611 changes the manner in which water districts determine the amount of flat rate assessment against the irrigable land they serve. Due to urbanization, water districts that previously delivered primarily irrigation water now deliver larger amounts of untreated water to cities. Senate Bill 611 allows water districts to determine assessments by taking into account the amount of expenses which are associated with both irrigation and city water delivery services. This gives water districts flexibility to decrease rates.



Senator Lucio congratulating the Hanna High School State finalist soccer team.

Helping children with special needs and their families

MEDICAL FACILITIES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN: Senate Bill 492 allows for the creation of “Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Centers” (PPECs), specialized non-residential day health facilities for special needs children. PPECs provide an environment for children to flourish in group settings, provide working parents relief, and reduce health care costs. The state must regulate PPECs. Children may attend if they have a condition that requires technologically-based nursing supervision. Children who qualify to attend a PPEC also qualify for nursing care under Medicaid.

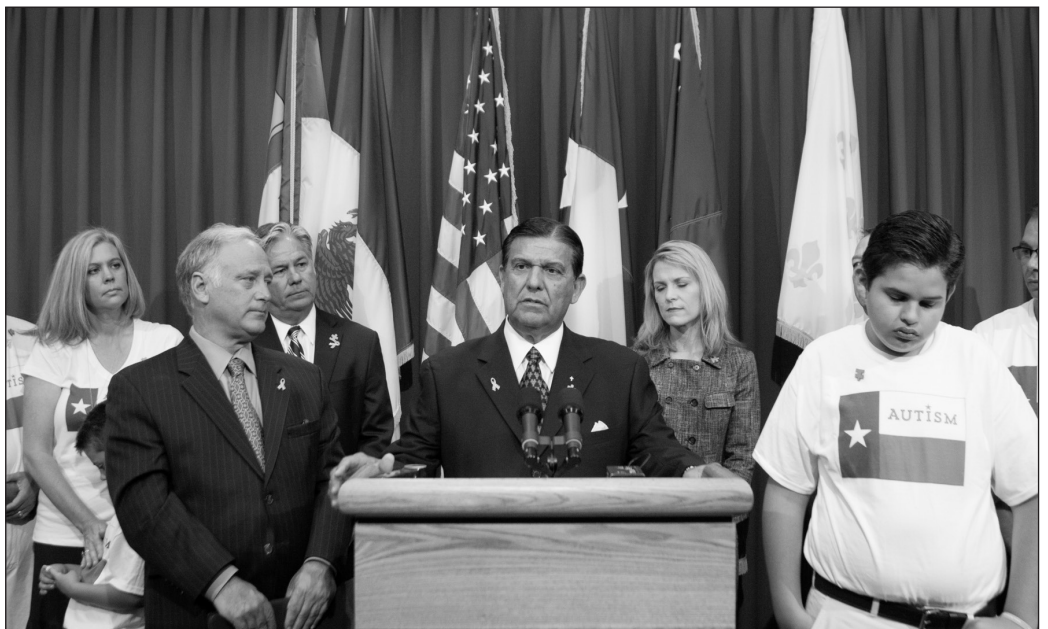
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVOCATES: Senate Bill 709 allows experienced special education advocates to assist parents of children with special needs in resolving disputes with their schools. The bill allows parents in federal due process hearings to be represented either by an attorney or a non-attorney with special knowledge of children with disabilities. Many parents cannot afford an attorney, or experienced attorneys may not be available in rural or border communities, thereby placing parents at a disadvantage. The bill now gives parents another resource.

BEHAVIOR IMPROVEMENT PLANS: Senate Bill 914 requires teachers to be adequately informed of “behavior improvement plans” (BIPs) for their special education students. Under federal law, schools may develop a BIP for students with behavioral problems related to their disability; however, the law did not make clear that BIPs must be provided to teachers. A behavior issue that is not dealt with according to the

BIP, may escalate and result in discipline, even if the behavior is not entirely the student's fault.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM: Senator Lucio successfully added a \$1.5 million item to the state's budget to fund professional development institutes for teachers of students with autism. The Texas Education Agency must partner with Texas Tech University (home to the Burkhart Center for Autism Education and Research) to create professional development programs for educators working with students with autism.

Senator Lucio also joint-authored Senate Bill 1484, a bill which builds upon previous legislation he passed requiring a health benefit plan provide certain coverage to an enrollee who is diagnosed with autism. Senate Bill 1484 removes a cap which allows providers to deny autism coverage after a child reaches 10 years of age. Studies indicate that autism does not necessarily subside by the time a child is 10 years of age and that continued coverage is necessary while the autism diagnosis is in place.



Senator Lucio at a press conference for Senate Bill 1484, which improves insurance coverage for children with autism.

Enacting laws to help and honor veterans

HOUSING ASSISTANCE TO VETERANS, EDUCATORS: Senate Bill 1553 by Senator Lucio adds veterans and educators to the list of individuals eligible under the “Homes for Texas Heroes Home Loan Program,” a program administered by the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC) which provides home loans and down payment assistance.

To be eligible for the Program, one must be a Texas resident who has been honorably discharged from the United States armed services or Texas National Guard. Spouses of deceased service members are also eligible to apply.

“Over the years, we have heard that the housing needs of Texas veterans is much greater than available resources to help them,” Senator Lucio said. “This bill gives Texas veterans an additional option when they’re searching for affordable housing.”

In 2001, Senator Lucio originally sponsored legislation which created a Professional Educators Home Loan Program to help Texas classroom teachers purchase a home. The program grew to include full-time paid teacher’s

aides, librarians, counselors, school nurses, and full-time teaching faculty in Texas nursing or allied health programs. The Professional Educators Home Loan Program expired in 2012; however Senate Bill 1553 now makes these professions eligible under “Homes for Texas Heroes.”

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS: The November ballot will have two proposed constitutional amendments of particular interest to veterans.

Proposition 1 (HJR 62): “authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a member of the armed services who is killed in action.”

Proposition 4 (HJR 24): “authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of part of the market value of the residence homestead of a partially disabled veteran or the surviving spouse of a partially disabled veteran if the residence homestead was donated to the disabled veteran by a charitable organization.”



Clockwise from top: Senator Lucio meeting with the McAllen chapter of the American Federation of Teachers during the group’s lobby day in March 2013; Senator Lucio gives an invocation before a joint session of the legislature honoring those Texans of the United States Armed Forces who have given their lives in defense of the Nation; Senator Lucio and Texas Governor Rick Perry welcome World War II veterans to the Texas Senate in May 2013.



Protecting consumers and disaster victims

HOMEOWNER VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS: An amendment to House Bill 585 by Senator Lucio protects homeowner victims of natural disasters from exorbitant property tax increases when they rebuild their homes. The bill provides that a replacement home or improvements made to a damaged home are not considered “a new improvement” if these “improvements” were made to satisfy requirements of the Texas General Land Office’s (GLO) disaster recovery program.

The GLO program requires disaster victims to follow state and federal regulations which may inadvertently increase home values, such as by requiring the use of better - quality materials to make the homes more resilient. Disaster victims participating in the program cannot opt out of these requirements and thus have no control over increased property value.

“Numerous Texans were forced to rebuild their homes after hurricanes Dolly and Ike, and the Bastrop wildfires. These individuals already lost their homes once; changing current law will now ensure that they aren’t taxed out of the homes they rebuilt,” Senator Lucio said.

HOME INSURANCE CONSUMERS: Senate Bill 112 by Senator Lucio helps consumers make responsible purchasing decisions by providing clear information about the true cost of homeowners’ insurance. The bill requires Texas insurance companies’ declaration pages include a list and explanation of each deductible selected by the insured, as well as the dollar amount of each deductible. Under current law, insurers are permitted to list deductibles as percentages, which can be confusing for consumers.



Senator Lucio and his son Representative Eddie Lucio III celebrated the passage of legislation creating the new South Texas university and medical school.

Ballot language for November 2013 constitutional amendments

In addition to two proposed amendments of interest to veterans (see page 5), the November ballot will include the following language. A condensed analyses of proposed constitutional amendments may be found on the Texas Legislative Council’s publications tab at www.tlc.state.tx.us.

Proposition 2 (HJR 79): “eliminating an obsolete requirement for a State Medical Education Board and a State Medical Education Fund, neither of which is operational.”

Proposition 3 (HJR 133): “to authorize a political subdivision of this state to extend the number of days that aircraft parts that are exempt from ad valorem taxation due to their location in this state for a temporary period may be located in this state for purposes of qualifying for the tax exemption.”

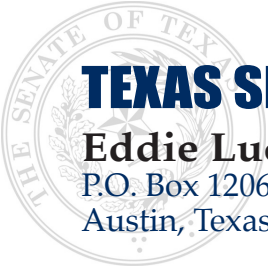
Proposition 5 (SJR 18): “to authorize the making of a reverse mortgage loan for the purchase of homestead property and to amend lender disclosures and other requirements in connection with a reverse mortgage loan.”

Proposition 6 (SJR 1): “providing for the creation of the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas and the State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas to assist in the financing of priority projects in the state water plan to ensure the availability of adequate water resources.”

Proposition 7 (HJR 87): “authorizing a home-rule municipality to provide in its charter the procedure to fill a vacancy on its governing body for which the unexpired term is 12 months or less.”

Proposition 8 (HJR 147 and SJR 54): “repealing Section 7, Article IX, Texas Constitution, which relates to the creation of a hospital district in Hidalgo County.”

Proposition 9 (SJR 42): “relating to expanding the types of sanctions that may be assessed against a judge or justice following a formal proceeding instituted by the State Commission on Judicial Conduct.”



TEXAS SENATOR

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(Left to right) Herminia “Minnie” Lucio, Representative Eddie Lucio III (spouse: Jaime Lucio), Alejandro A. Cisneros, Carlos “Carlitos” H. Cisneros, Jr., Olivia Rose Lucio (seated), Lynda Cisneros (spouse: Carlos Cisneros), Senator Lucio, and Anna Lynda Cisneros. Not pictured is the family’s newest edition, Eddie Lucio IV.



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